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LETTERS

TO THE

DEPUTIES

OF THE

ASSOCIATED AND PETITIONING
COUNTIES, CITIES, AND TOWNS;

ON THE MEANS NECESSARY TO

A REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT.

BY MAJOR JOHN CARTWRIGHT.

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LETTERS

TO THE

DEPUTIES

OF THE

ASSOCIATED AND PETITIONING COUNTIES, CITIES, AND TOWNS.

LETTER I.

GENTLEMEN,

YOU want to obtain a parliamentary reformation. Where are your means? What is the power by which you propoſe to effect it? There are at preſent but three powers in the kingdom that I know of; viz. the power of the crown, which is of great force and ever vigilant;—the power of the oppoſition, which is nothing but vanity and vexation of ſpirit;—and the power of the people, which is aſleep. I do not confound the two laſt powers together; becauſe in the power of the oppoſition there is hoſtility to the people as well as friendſhip. It is in truth no diſtinct power of

itſelf, but is properly reſolvable into, as it partakes of, the other two. Chooſe ye, therefore, this day which of theſe you will confide in; whether in the power of the people which preſerved your anceſtors, or in the power of the crown which oppreſſes yourſelves: as for me, I will put my truſt in the power of the people.

If you think you can depend upon the *crown* for relief, reſort you to parliament, where that power moves every ſpring. But if the power of the *people* be your choice, why then *apply to the people*. The electors are *not* the people. They are not the repreſentatives of the people. They are nothing more than a faint ſhadow of their antient majeſty; the worn-out image of their former greatneſs;—a mere broken remnant of national force, in whoſe poſſeſſion the defenſive arms of freedom are neither uſeful to the public nor themſelves; being doomed to behold their country pillaged and inſulted by the miniſters of the crown, while themſelves and their means of defence are the objects of contempt. To judge of the weight of the electors themſelves by their collective numbers, were a falſe eſtimate: becauſe a partial diſtribution of their elective force, reduces again this miſerable remnant to almoſt a non-

entity;

entity; ſince it is a well-known fact, that as many members as conſtitute a majority of the fulleſt houſe of commons that ever ſat, are ſent to parliament by a proportion of electors ſo ſmall, as not to exceed in number the inhabitants of *a ſingle town of ordinary importance*.

What then, in the name of common ſenſe, can the committee of Yorkſhire mean, by addreſſing themſelves to the *electors*, inſtead of the *people*, on the ſubject of reformation! The electors have done all that was in *their* power. They have given you the beſt parliament they had the means of chooſing. If you have ſuffered a national army of millions to dwindle away to a handful of invalids, who are exerciſed only once in ſeven years, and that merely in ridicule, will you, when the enemy, like another Xerxes, darkens your plains with his multitudes, and threatens the extirpation of your liberties, will you, I aſk, invoke theſe helpleſs invalids to ſave you, and think of no other defence? Are theſe the champions of whom one ſhall chaſe a thouſand, and two put ten thouſand to flight? What, are we no longer *a people* with a common cauſe! Are the diſfranchiſed part of the community the mere *helotes* of the electors, without a ſhare in the diſpute, or

an intereſt in its iſſue! A curſe upon the diſtinction! Abhorred be thoſe ſtatutes which have divided the people of England into free and not free! Our cauſe being one, and our danger the ſame, let all the people of England, without theſe odious diſtinctions, be called forth! Let the diſbanded millions be joined again to the remnant of national force, and act in concert for their mutual defence!—If the diſfranchiſed are become as the mute cattle of the field, without a voice to elect or to remonſtrate with thoſe who rule over them, are they deprived alſo of their feeling? Have they loſt all ſenſe of injuries, and the capacity of anticipating evils to come? Are they, in ſhort, diſpoſſeſſed of their human nature? If theſe remain to them, call them forth, I ſay, to demand reſtitution of thoſe political arms of defence, *their annual ſuffrages*, which have been wickedly ſtolen from them, and the loſs of which is *the very definition of ſlavery*, as it muſt alſo be attended with all its horrid conſequences. Have you not a court of judicature, which, as it claims unbounded power in all caſes of election rights, is bound to hear their complaints and redreſs their grievances? Can men fill the ſeats of judgment, and not render juſtice?

The

The power of the people, for want of *exerciſe*, is become a mere latent and uſeleſs power; and a power of which they themſelves feel but a very imperfect conſciouſneſs. An acute writer has well obſerved, that "power and rights unaſſerted for ſeven years, a fourth part of "active life, are next to given up; and "it is certain human invention could not "have contrived a better introduction to "deſpotic power. The habits of ſeven "years go a great way towards enſlaving "the moſt vigorous mind and determined "principles; and it is no wonder the exertions of freedom are ſo ſluggiſh, when "to the actual influence of corruption, "theſe habits are ſuperadded, which always leave a languor of feeling, if not "an indifference of ſentiment, unleſs "acting under the immediate ſtimulus of "temporary or local provocations." And another ſagacious obſerver remarks, that "when a people have loſt the power of "legally aſſerting their rights, they are "expoſed to that which is the higheſt degree of political ruin, the loſs of even "*the remembrance* of them."

If the ſeptennial act by a natural conſequence have produced this indifference, this languor, this ſluggiſhneſs of exertion amongſt

amongſt our *electors*, by only a ſuſpenſion of their rights, what muſt be the torpor of our *non*-electors, who are totally deprived of them! The conſideration is truly ſerious. The awakening ſuch a people to a ſenſe of their condition, and the inciting of them to a recovery of their rights, is not a taſk to be undertaken with indolence, nor performed with luke-warmneſs. Ardent muſt be the effort. Toil and anxiety attend it. Not, however, greater than are frequently exerted for far inferior purpoſes. Counties may be canvaſſed and carried on this occaſion with as little trouble, leſs expence, and more honour and ſatisfaction than in ordinary election conteſts. But, were the labour and the difficulties tenfold more in number or magnitude, it mattered not: THE THING MUST BE DONE. We have no alternative; but one, which I truſt there are few Engliſhmen degenerate enough to embrace. We muſt do this thing, or relinquiſh our freedom for ever. This is not one of thoſe various expedients, by which ſome people think our liberty may be ſecured; but it is the one thing needful, without which, to talk of freedom were to talk without any ideas annexed to our words, and were a contradiction in terms.

If

If we would walk, we muſt uſe our legs; if we would ſpeak, we muſt move our tongue: it is the organ appointed by nature for that office, and none other can perform it. If a people would be free, they muſt preſerve the powers of election to individuals unviolated, unabridged. If they would recover loſt freedom, they muſt reſtore theſe loſt powers. It is the law of nature. They can no more recover freedom by any *other expedients*, than they can walk upon their tongue, or ſpeak with their feet. If we ought to value *time*, becauſe " it is the " ſtuff that life is made of;" ſo ought we to hold ſacred *the election franchiſe of individuals*, becauſe it is the ſtuff that public freedom is made of. Can there be a truth more evident, than that the political freedom of a community is the aggregate of the political freedoms of the individuals who compoſe it? As their ſeveral perſons collectively, make the community itſelf; ſo their ſeveral freedoms united, conſtitute the general freedom. Nothing can be plainer. A whole cannot differ in nature and eſſence from the parts of which it is compoſed. No number of colours will make a ſound; nor will any combination of ſounds produce a colour. How then can public freedom be recovered, but by reſtoring

reſtoring the franchiſe of individuals, which are its conſtituent parts, the very ſtuff it is made of?

As we have read of a tyrant who wiſhed his people had but one neck, and ſince our common ſenſe rejects ſelf-evident abſurdity, we ſhould never acknowledge a power in the crown or in a parliament, for reducing the community to any ſize it liked beſt, by taking away at pleaſure the *lives* of individuals; neither can I ſee why it were leſs abſurd ſhould we acknowledge ſuch a power, for reducing *the freedom* of the community to any ſize at its good pleaſure, by taking away the *franchiſe* of individuals. As not the life, ſo neither is the freedom of an individual to be ſported with, or taken away at the arbitrary will of any. Such a principle once admitted, is a link that by neceſſary conſequence draws after it a chain capable of binding the whole community in ſlavery.

LETTER

LETTER II.

WE may liſten to eloquent ſpeeches about correcting the expenditure of public money, aboliſhing uſeleſs offices, and taking away unmerited penſions, as the *means* of reſtoring independency to parliament and freedom to the people; but until a combination of ſounds ſhall produce a colour, or a man ſhall ſpeak with his feet, it will remain impoſſible to recover our freedom by ſuch means. Such would be the *effects* of freedom, but they cannot be its *cauſes*. The ideas are as diſtinct in their nature, as the ideas of *liberty* and *property*, or *ſound* and *colour*.

In like manner, we may waſte our time in ſelf-deception, by ſeeking ſalvation where ſalvation cannot reſide—in triennial parliaments with additional knights, or in any other capricious project; but ſo long as God ſhall be pleaſed to continue in force the preſent laws of nature, our grievances cannot be redreſſed, nor the evils we complain of be removed, until the whole maſs of the people ſhall have recovered thoſe ſacred, unalienable rights of election, *the*

loſs of which is the SOLE cauſe of all our woe. For theſe rights it is impoſſible to give us an equivalent ; and to offer a *ſubſtitute* is the moſt inſolent mockery.

Seſſional parliaments, with a perfect equality of repreſentation, being what theſe rights require, and what is eſſential to the conſtitution, if we have not theſe, we have not the conſtitution ; for a thing cannot be ſeparated from its eſſence. To deſtroy eſſentials is to deſtroy *exiſtence*. Where then is the man, who, with premeditation, ſhall pluck from the conſtitution its eſſentials, and dare to call himſelf a friend to his country !

Little will it avail us that we be permitted to poſſeſs a wretched ſomething in the form of the conſtitution ; an appearance, a likeneſs, an empty huſk ! The ſtronger the likeneſs which evil bears to good, and the cloſer the reſemblance of wrong to right, by ſo much more are they pernicious to mankind ; ſince they deceive with facility, and are never detected but in conſequence of their miſchiefs. If we are to have any *other* thing than the conſtitution impoſed upon us, let it be ſomething as *un*like to it as poſſible ; ſo that we may ſee our danger. *Knowing* that we have an enemy, we can guard againſt his attacks ; but

but there is no defence againſt the dagger of him who is received into our boſom as a friend. The preſent ſubſtitute for the conſtitution, by retaining its reſemblance and preſerving its form, has failed to apprize us that the crown has been that treacherous friend which, under the maſk of aid, protection, and ſervice, has ſtruck its dagger deep into the vitals of our freedom, purloined our rights, waſted our property, and brought us to the brink of ruin. Thus every ſubſtitute for the conſtitution is one of thoſe deceitful fruits, whoſe bloom is a feaſt, but whoſe taſte is death. He that puts the poiſonous plant into the ſoil, plants a curſe to human race as prolific as the fabled box of Pandora.

In every other ſcience, knowledge and improvement are progreſſive; as truth is obtained, error is caſt away; men avail themſelves of the wiſdom of their predeceſſors, and no one teaches that which has long been exploded as falſe and abſurd. By what fatality is it then, that in the ſcience of civil government, a ſcience of more importance to our temporal happineſs than all the others combined, we abound with ſo many falſe teachers, and ſeem to ſtudy only for the purpoſe of making a retrograde progreſs from light to

darkneſs, from knowledge to ignorance, from freedom to ſlavery! To what end is it that our anceſtors, ſo many years ago, improved upon Greek and Roman polity, by that "beſt diſcovery of political wiſ-"dom" which places *every man* either in perſon or by his repreſentative in the aſſembly of law-makers; thereby conſtituting every citizen his own legiſlator, agreeably to that ſound principle, that *law to bind all, muſt be aſſented to by all*, which is the key-ſtone of our conſtitution, if we with a ſottiſhneſs that would diſgrace barbarians, ſhall act in direct contradiction to that wiſdom which is our light, and madly caſt away that conſtitution which is our only ſhield! And to do this at the very moment that we ſee, and feel, and groan with anguiſh of ſpirit bordering on deſperation, for the evils brought on us from having ſuffered this repreſentation to be torn from us, were an act of ſuch perverſeneſs, ſtupidity, and wickedneſs, as no words can expreſs.

Every Engliſhman having an undoubted right to be either by his repreſentative, or *perſonally*, in parliament, where the laws which affect his property and his life are enacted, there is not a non-elector who may not juſtly demand, in his own right, admiſſion

miſſion into the commons houſe; ſo that he may be there his own political guardian; ſince the guardians appointed him by the law and the conſtitution have been unjuſtly taken from him. And it deſerves to be noticed, that all tumults and riots for redreſs of grievances, are the legitimate effects of non-repreſentation; ſince it is not practicable to deliver *in* parliament, the ſenſe of a people who have no voice there; and if it be preſented *to* parliament, what juſtice can be hoped for by the aggrieved, from that power which has avowed its fixed purpoſe to oppreſs them, by depriving them of that repreſentation which was their ſole defence; in which very inſtance it continually exerciſes over them the moſt conſummate tyranny? It is the dictate of nature for men to ſeek in their own collective ſtrength, that redreſs from tyrant rulers which they do not hope to obtain from the mere juſtice of their complaints; whereas men who enjoyed a conſtitutional repreſentation, corrected and purified by themſelves from ſeſſion to ſeſſion, could not poſſibly have at any time either cauſe or inclination for ſuch proceedings.

LETTER

LETTER III.

WE have now only to reſolve the important queſtion—'How is the latent 'power of the people to be called forth with 'ſufficient energy and perſeverance, for the 'attainment of the conſtitutional repre-'ſentation we have in view?'

In the abſtract, the anſwer is this;—Give them light: ſhew them where lie depoſited their political arms of defence, taken from them by fraud, and with-held by deliberate treachery: and then, invincible in the juſtice of their cauſe, lead them on to demand *their own*.

This honeſt taſk will not be ſo difficult as faction would fain teach us to believe. Great is the power of truth, and if employed it ſhall prevail. Truths which flatter every mind with a conſciouſneſs of its own dignity,—which ſting it with a poignant ſenſe of wrongs the moſt inſupportable,—which hold forth ſubſtantial redreſs, and preſent to immediate attainment an object of ineſtimable value and of natural deſire,—which demonſtrate that if it be neglected, ſlavery and the direſt calamity muſt be the conſequences,—and which ſatisfy

tisfy the people that in order to ſucceed, they have only to ſpeak their feelings, and calmly and peaceably to act in concert for their common redreſs, as pointed out by the law and the conſtitution—truths ſuch as theſe, cannot fail to ſink into the hearts, and to call forth the power of the people.

This is not the kind of call to which they have heretofore been accuſtomed; and to which, experience of conſtant deception hath taught them at length to become totally deaf.—This is not a call to beſtow power upon others; but to poſſeſs it themſelves: it is not a call to raiſe the callers into office and authority, with lying expectations of redreſs that never comes; but to do that which is ſubſtantial redreſs in itſelf, and a complete ſecurity alſo againſt future miſrule.—This is not a cold and incomprehenſible propoſition, for a meaſure that is to work out our ſalvation we know not when, we know not how; or rather, that is only to give tyranny a new name, by calling it triennial inſtead of ſeptennial.—The very idea of a triennial parliament, as an object to reformers, moves me with indignation and amazement.—What! Is that a meaſure for rouzing a torpid nation! Where is its ſelf-evident patriotiſm! Where is the certainty, where the probability, of its

its redreſſing the ſmalleſt grievance! Where is *the ſingle individual* to whom it would reſtore loſt freedom! And where is the evidence that it is not even the inſidious ſcheme of ſome ſecret unprincipled faction, to defeat if poſſible that reformation which the agonies of their expiring country ſo loudly call for; and ſuggeſted only, becauſe they know it hath not a ſingle requiſite for calling forth in full exertion the power of the people!

But there are ſome who ſay that there is nothing which *can* call forth this power; that the people are deaf alike to every voice; that neither a ſenſe of their own danger, nor the call of patriotiſm, be it ever ſo pure, can awaken them; and in ſhort, that through corruption they are become inſenſible to every virtuous impreſſion, and capable of nothing better than a deſpotic government.—But who is authorized to paſs this cenſure upon them? Who has made the experiment? Where is the band of patriots that has yet invited them to reſtore the conſtitution? Where are thoſe virtuous repreſentatives who have employed their eloquence to make the people ſenſible where their true danger lies, and what is the root of all their grievances? Away then with this baſe calumny of their

bitterneſs

bittereſt enemies!—The reproach ſhall ſoon be retorted upon its malignant inventors. —The Duke of Richmond has erected the ſtandard of true patriotiſm, and nobly aſſerted in parliament the rights of his country. Amongſt the moſt virtuous and intelligent of the community, a knowledge of the true principles of reform makes a rapid progreſs, and is daily diſſeminated alſo amongſt the people; whoſe glad reception of it, hath not a little confirmed their deafneſs to the call of faction, nor will fail to inſure, could it ever have been doubted, their giving effectual ſupport to ſuch leaders as ſhall form themſelves into a band, ſufficient for conducting the glorious plan in the ſeveral counties of the kingdom.

But is it poſſible to doubt of the people's retaining the neceſſary feelings for our purpoſe, when we recollect the "*phrenzy of* "*virtue*" with which they expreſſed thoſe feelings but a few months ago; when we call to mind the flame of their enthuſiaſm and the tranſports of their joy on the acquittal of Admiral Keppel; and when we remember alſo the degree of anxiety with which they took part with Mr. Wilkes on conſtitutional queſtions. Did theſe inſtances ſhew them diſpoſed to crouch under the foot of deſpotiſm? or prove them in-

 ſenſible

ſenſible to all virtuous impreſſions? deaf to the voice of patriotiſm? and regardleſs of the conſtitution?

Now what, in the caſes of Mr. Wilkes and Admiral Keppel, was the ſecret which called forth ſuch animation? It is a ſecret that we who propoſe to animate them again ought to know. Why then it was ſimply this.—A plain appeal on facts *which came home to their boſoms*, in one caſe as *citizens*, in the other as *men*. They were fully ſatiſfied that *they underſtood the caſes*; and by the law of nature they *felt* and they *acted*.

If by the mere force of ſympathy they could feel with ſo much ſenſibility for the admiral, will they feel nothing for themſelves, when you have placed their wrongs and their danger full before them? If they felt ſo intenſely for Mr. Wilkes in a cauſe in which their intereſt was as it were remote and only probable, will they remain unmoved in one wherein they themſelves have an immediate intereſt, that embraces every object for which citizens can feel concern? If for a minute part of the conſtitution, a freedom from ſeizure by general warrants which happened but now-and-then in an age, they ſhewed ſuch jealouſy of arbitrary power, and ſuch a paſſionate attachment to the leaſt of the liberties of their country,

country, what may not be expected from them, when called upon to defend the vaſt aggregate of thoſe liberties, and the whole of that beloved conſtitution?

If you bring not your plan of reform home to the boſoms of all men, *by ſelf-evident rectitude and the abſolute certainty of its redreſſive powers*, you will preach to the winds: for although by the activity of ambitious ſpirits, a little popular clamour may be excited in your favour; alas! what is that to oppoſe the power of the crown with the command of a venal parliament, a ſtanding army, and an influence created by the diſpenſing of millions! But once invite the people to embark in *their own cauſe*, for the recovery of SESSIONAL PARLIAMENTS WITH A PERFECT EQUALITY OF REPRESENTATION, enjoyed now by *none*, and conſequently reſtoring privilege to *all*, and you ſhall inſtantly ſtimulate the boſom of every individual with the proſpect of an immediate perſonal gain; you ſhall cauſe him to feel that his intereſt, his pride, his honour are all concerned in the iſſue; you ſhall make him ſenſible that ſelf-preſervation requires his exertion; and by implanting at the ſame time in his mind, a conſciouſneſs that he is rendering to his country the nobleſt ſervice of a genuine

 patriot,

patriot, you ſhall inſpire him with every ſentiment that is neceſſary to your ſucceſs. And thus it is that, for once, you have the power to out-bribe adminiſtration; to bribe the millions, and ſhew them how little they know of their boaſted art. You will alſo teach them how to bribe without corrupting; a ſecret they have never yet poſſeſſed.

A plan of reform which thus addreſſes the affections and embraces the intereſts of *every individual*, is, as I humbly conceive, the only plan which can inſpire *unanimity* and bring forth THE IRRESISTIBLE POWER OF THE PEOPLE.

Many have been the occaſions on which I have obſerved that the people are far more willing to receive light, than ſome popular men are to beſtow it upon them; and readier to follow towards the goal of complete freedom, than they are to lead. This being a tribute of praiſe due to the people, I think it is not very fair, nor very prudent, in certain men to hold ſuch language as this: "It is not you, who contend ſo ſtrenuouſly "for the univerſal right of ſuffrage and an- "nual parliaments, that ſpeak the ſenſe of "the people: it is us who confine ourſelves "to the very prayer of their petition, who "uſe their own words, and conſequently "expreſs their own meaning." This is plauſible;

plauſible; but in a publication of laſt year I gave, as I think, a full anſwer to all arguments of this nature, by comparing the duty of the patriot with that of a phyſician; whoſe buſineſs it was to preſcribe to his patient ſuch medicines as were proper for *curing* the diſeaſe he complained of; and not to conſign him to a lingering death, nor to hurry him out of the world, by adminiſtering drugs equivalent either to powder of poſt, or to poiſon, becauſe, forſooth, he had not expreſsly demanded better, nor pointed out the preciſe quantity and proportions for his own malady. I do not envy the feelings of a phyſician who acts ſuch a part as this, and then makes a merit of having *confined himſelf to the prayer of the ſick man's petition*, and given him *the very medicine he aſked for*. A petition to *be healed* of a diſeaſe, in whatever words it may be expreſſed, is, I ſhould humbly conceive, a petition for proper and *efficacious* remedies. Any other conſtruction is a mere *Weſtminſter-hall* quirk. If the phyſician, or the patriot, perceive that a petitioner has any prejudices againſt, or even an averſion to, *the only medicine* that can ſave him, I pray what is his evident duty on the occaſion? *He* may act and declaim as he pleaſes; *he* may make a merit

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of that obedience by which the health or life of his patient is deſtroyed :—but I will remonſtrate with the petitioner, in ſuch a caſe ; I will lay open to him the true nature of his diſeaſe, and urge upon him, as he would preſerve his exiſtence, to uſe the only means which nature has permitted for his cure. I ſhould think it my duty to reaſon him out of his ill-founded averſion, and to remove his prejudices by exhibiting his reſtorative in a form that would pleaſe his eye and become agreeable to his palate ; but on no account would I deceive him. A phyſician preſcribes only to a ſick man when he is called in ; but our pretended patriots, like the Adelphi doctor, are continually calling upon the people, publiſhing their ſpeeches and advertiſing their noſtrums, with all the captivating arts of eloquence. They alarm them on the ſubjects of public diſtreſs and crown influence, and they aſcribe every evil to their opponents the miniſtry, although they well know that the cauſe exiſted before that miniſtry were born. They boldly preſcribe their own celeſtial influence as the cure, and in order to prepare the way to their exhibition, they dictate, ſometimes in perſon and ſometimes by their emiſſaries, a petition or an aſſociation, and

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put into the mouths of the people *the very words* they ſhall uſe. The people ſuſpecting no ill, make them *their own*, and they believe they have prayed for that which is to prove an efficacious remedy: but in the end their confidence is repaid by their adviſers declaring that they ſhall adhere to thoſe *words of the people* which they themſelves have dictated, and, as it then turns out, for the very purpoſe of defeating their wiſhes, ſhould they ever appear to extend beyond a change of miniſtry.

From ſuch ſtate-phyſicians, the Lord deliver poor England!

LETTER

LETTER IV.

I AM not without hopes that I have made it appear, That a perfect and efficacious reform, or the revival of *an univerſal repreſentation in parliaments of a ſingle ſeſſion*, is ſo far from being *im*practicable, that it is the reverſe, and the *only* reform that can be carried into execution; becauſe it is the only one that can move the people to exert themſelves with ſufficient energy for withſtanding the corrupt influence of the crown.

I wiſh now to point out the inconveniencies attending injudicious or ſuperfluous meaſures. All ſuperfluous matter tends to miſlead, to create and to nouriſh doubts, to enervate exertion, and to protract the conteſt to the imminent hazard of public freedom: and injudicious meaſures diſappoint the ſanguine expectations of the people, fruſtrate their efforts, weary their patience, and weaken that confidence in their leaders which is ſo neceſſary to ſucceſs. It is the general that never makes a movement without gaining an advantage, that never expoſes himſelf to be attacked, and that never ſtrikes but when he can ſtrike

ſtrike to the purpoſe, who is the idol of his ſoldiers and ſure of their ſupport.

We ought never to forget, that, by a law of nature, "The bulk of every nation "is deſtined to *labour* not to *ſtudy*, to *act* "and not to *ſpeculate*." Hence we derive this maxim; that 'It is in the eſſence of a 'plan of national reform, to keep the 'people in *action*.' It is their proper element; it is the flattering ſituation in which they feel their ſtrength and conſequence; and it is the only means by which they can make themſelves reſpected, by thoſe who have ſo long treated them as lifeleſs, ſenſeleſs matter. Short delegations of truſt and frequent reports to the people are, in ſeaſons of the greateſt tranquillity, the life of freedom. How much more ſo, then, at this critical juncture! At every ſtep of our progreſs let the people be conſulted. They will then ſee our vigilance and fidelity; they will be parties to every act; they will be ſenſible of every obſtruction we meet with; they will feel all our anxieties, and by our example be inſpired with that firm and ſedate temper of mind, which is to carry them with unſhaken perſeverance to the end of their journey.

Another maxim which ought to be attended to, is this; 'Every particular

'movement of the people ſhould lead directly towards their grand object, and be 'ſo evidently eſſential to its attainment, 'that, if counteracted by their oppreſſors, 'it ſhould *neceſſarily beget in them* a new 'movement of greater vigour.'—And we ſhould equally remember, that they cannot predicate the claims of nature, but they can *feel* them; they cannot define juſtice, but they can *demand* it; they cannot ſpeculate upon rights, but they can *exerciſe* them; they cannot demonſtrate liberty, but they can *ardently defend* it. Upon the mere *letter* of the declaratory act, America gave not herſelf the trouble to reaſon; but the *ſpirit* of it threw her into a flame.

Provided the foregoing premiſes be juſt, it ſhould follow, that to correct the expenditure of public money is not our firſt object. Mr. Burke, in ſupport of his plan of œconomy, refers us to its great effects in a neighbouring kingdom, under the direction of the wiſe Neckar. We know it has given ſtrength to the arm of the French king; but we know alſo, that it has not reſtored to the eſtates of France the ſmalleſt portion of that power they antiently ſhared with their arbitrary monarch, nor to the wretched people a particle of that liberty they once poſſeſſed. A petition therefore for correcting

ing that abuſe, as it leads not directly to the main object, is an injudicious and ſuperfluous meaſure; and being a queſtion of mere expediency, involved in the myſteries of ſtate policy, it is a caſe which cannot be brought home to the boſoms of the people with ſufficient force to call forth their exertions. Such an attempt *unſupported* by their power, were a frivolous waſte of time; for we know that corruption hath not in itſelf a capacity to change its nature: and was their power already in *a ſtate of exertion*, ſuch an exerciſe of it would be ſtill worſe; it would be picking up ſtraws when we ought to be ſecuring the harveſt.

In ſhort, every light in which the queſtion of reform can be placed; every feeling, every ſentiment which it excites; all the reaſonings and all the meditations we can beſtow upon it; tend alike to theſe plain concluſions; 1ſt, That a conſtitutional repreſentation is the *one* object, which includes every other which we have to contend for; 2dly, That it can *only* be obtained by the power of the people in full exertion; 3dly, That this exertion can *only* be excited by *a proſpect of the immediate attainment* of that one object; and 4thly, That when the power of the people ſhall

once be brought to that ſtate of exertion, nothing leſs than *the whole* of our object will be worth a thought.

Committees may meet, and general delegations may aſſemble; reſolutions may be framed, and petitions be preſented; but as far as theſe evident concluſions ſhall be diſregarded, in ſo much will all our efforts prove fruitleſs. When opportunities ſhall have been flung away, when difficulties ſhall have increaſed, and when diſappointment ſhall have proved the ſolidity of theſe reaſonings, it may be well if it ſhall not be too late to avail ourſelves of them. But I have diſcharged the duty of a citizen; and if I muſt behold the final extinction of my country's freedom, it will be with the conſolation of never having feared to face its open enemies, nor been duped by its concealed ones.

Our practical line of conduct is now no leſs clearly pointed out by our ſituation, than the foregoing concluſions are obvious. Dropping all uſeleſs matter, we muſt ſtate our undeniable election rights, which ſtand upon the rock of truth immoveable as the throne of heaven; and to have theſe rights reſtored to us in full enjoyment, ought to be the ſole prayer of our petition. Having petitioned, we muſt not fancy the buſineſs done.

done. We muſt not be told, that reſpect for parliament requires that we take for granted juſtice will be done, and proceed to no other ſtep until its deciſion be known. Reſpect for our repreſentatives may be a good thing; but that reſpect for ourſelves, which is inſpired by a concern for every thing that is dear to us as a people, is full as neceſſary. By this we are taught to fear every thing, to ſuſpect every thing, and to provide againſt every thing, that arbitrary power ambuſhed in corruption can deviſe for eluding our requeſt. Inſtead of taking for granted that juſtice *will* be done; it is our wiſdom to take for granted it will *not* be done. Fore-warned, fore-armed, muſt be our motto. If any thing can inſure the ſucceſs of a firſt effort, it is preparation for a ſecond. So that the ſame principle is to be our guide, whether we would rouze our country to a ſenſe of its danger, or parliament to a ſenſe of its duty:—*The people muſt be put in motion.*

It is neceſſary alſo that they be not for a moment ſuffered to imagine, that a handful of corrupt men in authority can reſiſt the juſt demands of an united nation. Neither muſt their cauſe be left to depend upon the abounding pride and deficient virtue of any men, merely becauſe they

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are in oppoſition to miniſtry. There are thoſe of the minority, who are as little inclined to a complete enfranchiſement of the people, as miniſters themſelves; and but for whom ſome are of opinion it had ere now been obtained. Here, then, is that deafneſs to the voice of patriotiſm, that inſenſibility to the call of freedom, of which they themſelves have been the firſt and the loudeſt to complain againſt *the people*.

The threſhing floor muſt be winnowed. In the wheat is the ſolidity, the virtue, and the nouriſhment; although, while unſeparated, it is leſs ſeen than the tares and the chaff which cover it. Let thoſe who have no ſide-views, and look ſtraight to the conſtitution as their only object, have confidence in their cauſe; let them no longer court, but compel that converſion, which nought but a dread of ſhame can effect; and therefore let them without further heſitation obey the warm impulſe of their hearts, and go forth amongſt the people, to put them in motion. The public approbation ſhall be their ſtrength; the public will, their future power. Nor let it be doubted but that a meaſure of ſo deciſive a caſt, inſpired by ſolid wiſdom and ſuperior ardor, ſhall fire with emulation each tardier breaſt, and give the ſpur

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to ſluggiſh virtue. It will then be ſeen whether a handful of proud men can any more *ſuppreſs* the ſenſe of the people, than a handful can *reſiſt* it.

To a body of gentlemen ſingled out by their country for its preſervation, it were unneceſſary to ſuggeſt the detail of ſuch a plan; but to the ſuffering public at large, it is highly expedient to ſhew by what ſucceſſive ſteps and means they may carry it into execution, without going to thoſe extremities which their oppreſſions would juſtify, but which every friend to humanity muſt wiſh to avoid. In the propoſitions which make the ſubject of the following letter, ſelected from the inexhauſtible ſtores of the conſtitution and of nature, I truſt will be ſeen all the neceſſary materials and the clear outline of a plan by which the people of England, in deſpite of all the mercenaries of influence and corruption, may *walk down their oppreſſors*, without diſturbing the public tranquillity, or touching with violence or diſreſpect the hair of any man's head. Nay, ſo perfectly peaceable are the means, that, to *walk down* oppreſſion, is a term of too ſtrong import for the idea which I mean to convey; ſince all that is neceſſary, is *not*

to join in our own deſtruction, and to leave our defence to the wiſdom of the *law* and uprightneſs of *judges* and *juries*. We may ſmile in ſecurity at the ſword of the magiſtrate, and all the machinery of armies, as inſtruments no way capable of defeating our purpoſe.

LETTER

LETTER V.

Propoſitions and Remarks.

1. TO revert to firſt principles is *not* to innovate; but it is *to remove* innovations which have corrupted the laws and impaired freedom.

2. " *Every Engliſhman* is intended to be " preſent in parliament, either in *perſon* " or by procuration and *attorney*, of what " pre-eminence, ſtate, dignity, or quality " ſoever he be, from the prince to the " *loweſt* perſon of England; and the con- " ſent of the parliament is taken to be " every man's conſent."

Note. The poor man has an *equal* right but *more* need to have the appointment of a legiſlative guardian than the rich one.

3. Reaſon, juſtice, and the common ſafety require, that the repreſentation of the whole of this nation in parliament, be in due proportion to the ſeveral parts; agreably to the principles of the conſtitution and the maxims of law.

4. There is no power in parliament to violate a ſingle principle of the conſtitu-

tion, nor to enact any thing againſt reaſon, juſtice, and the common ſafety.

5. It is, and *always was*, contrary to the conſtitution, for the *crown* to apportion the repreſentation of the *commons* in parliament at its pleaſure.

6. If, through error, either the crown or parliament, do, or paſs any act to infringe the right of the commons to a complete and equally-proportioned repreſentation, ſuch act is VOID.

Note. Hence the ſtatute of disfranchiſement is *no law*, and we *ought not to obey it*. Neither ought we to regard any of thoſe void charters by which kings have given to petty boroughs a monopoly of repreſentation.

7. It is the conſtitutional and unalienable right of the commonality of England, to elect a new commons houſe of parliament *every ſeſſion*; becauſe, if a parliament continue in being for a longer term, then all perſons who have arrived at man's eſtate ſince the laſt election, are unjuſtly deprived of their repreſentation in the legiſlature, and the conſtitution is thereby violated in its firſt principle.

8. If, through error, parliament do paſs any act to take away this right, ſuch act is VOID.

Note.

Note. Hence triennial and ſeptennial ſtatutes are *no laws*, and it is *criminal* to obey them: and hence alſo, the preſent parliament muſt ceaſe *in law* with the preſent ſeſſion.

9. The commons houſe of parliament is *not* the third eſtate of the realm, but only *its repreſentative* or *proxy*; and neceſſarily incapable of abridging the rights of its *principal*, the community at large.

10. Each ſtate of this realm is by the conſtitution independent of either or both of the other two.

11. At the expiration of every parliament, that is to ſay, at the cloſe of that *one* ſeſſion to which alone its power can legally extend, all powers which the commons at large or their anceſtors at any period had ever delegated to repreſentatives, have *ipſo facto* reverted to themſelves; and do then reſide in them, THE THIRD ESTATE OF THE REALM, in full ſovereignty undiminiſhed, and limited only by the *conſtitution*.

12. When a new parliament is to be formed, it is for the commons themſelves, and them alone, to preſcribe the number of perſons to whom they will delegate their ſovereignty in that parliament.

Note. This is a queſtion with which the king and lords cannot meddle. It is their buſineſs to meet whatever proxy the third eſtate of the realm ſhall think proper to make its repreſentative. Hence the *crown* cannot preſcribe the number of members to be choſen for any *particular* place. Its Inſertion of the number in the writ of ſummons is only to be underſtood as matter of *information*, and to be regarded as that information be true or falſe ; for the people are only bound to abide by the number ſo mentioned, when it agrees with *their proportion* of the number which is to repreſent the whole of the commons.

13. None other than the people in their collective capacity have a right to alter the conſtitution ; and not even the people themſelves can make ſuch alterations, as to deprive poſterity of the rights eſſential to freedom ; amongſt which that of a *conſtitutional* repreſentation in the legiſlature, or a repreſentation of *all* in *ſeſſional* parliaments, is the fundamental one.

14. The powers and privileges of a commons houſe of parliament are *not* derived to it by *inheritance*, but entruſted to it by *delegation* ; they deſcend not from any *former*

mer houſe of commons, but flow immediately from *thoſe who created it*; neither do they *proceed* from its communion with the other two branches of the legiſlature, although that communion is neceſſary to their *effect* in making of laws.

15. It is eſſential to the rights, freedom, and independency of the Engliſh commons, that they have power to correct the abuſes in their own repreſentation; and to ſee to the due limiting in duration, that truſt which *they* repoſe, and that authority which *they* delegate to their repreſentatives in parliament.

16. Were the crown, or the lords, to concur with unfaithful proxies in any act for depriving the Engliſh commons of this inherent power, or were they to concur in an act for totally diſfranchiſing any part of the ſaid commons without proof of a crime meriting ſo great a puniſhment, ſuch concurrence would be a groſs and traiterous violation of the freedom and independency of the third eſtate of the realm, it would deſtroy the balance of the conſtitution, and it would be a breach of the compact between the legiſlature and the people, removing the foundations of obedience and introductive of anarchy and confuſion.

17. Were the *proxies* of the people themſelves

ſelves to join with the king and the lords in ſuch an act *againſt their principals*, it would be a crime ſo unnatural and of ſuch enormity as there is no word in our language to expreſs: it would be the aggregate of diſloyalty, baſeneſs, treaſon, and parricide combined.

18. Thoſe proxies of the commons who reſpectively aſſented to the paſſing of the *ſeptennial* act in 1716, the *triennial* act in 1695, and the *diſfranchiſing* act in 1429, were guilty of this crime; the dreadful conſequences of which are now ſo ſeverely felt, in a corrupt legiſlature, a tyrannical government, and a nearly ruined nation.

19. If, through the negligence of the legiſlature, there be at any time a want of laws for aſcertaining the relative ſhares of repreſentation due to each county, city, and town reſpectively, the inhabitants have nevertheleſs an undoubted right to ſend to parliament ſuch a number of repreſentatives as ſhall appear to be their due proportion of the commons houſe, according to the moſt approved calculations extant.

20. Writs of election are ſo far from *eſſential*, that they are *un*conſtitutional; ſince they are an exerciſe of a *ſtrange* power in the crown, by which the very exiſtence of parliaments is at its mercy.

Note.

Note. Were a gold mine diſcovered in Hanover equal to the neceſſities of royalty, farewel to parliaments in England! Writs of election ſtand not upon the authority of any poſitive law, but upon antient uſage only. Their power of notifying to the commons the *time* and *place*, is prerogative pretty well ſtretched; but to ſuffer theſe writs to *preſcribe* the number of members to be choſen, were to acknowledge that the *crown* has a right to apportion the repreſentation of the *commons* at its pleaſure. As not parliament itſelf can enact injuſtice, much leſs can the crown by its writ tear up the liberties of England by the roots!

21. In the 28th year of Edw. I. the ſheriff of the two counties of Oxford and Berks received a writ for the election of members for Oxfordſhire, and none for Berks; but nevertheleſs the commons of Berks, *without other authority than their own inherent right*, proceeded "gratis" (as Prynne expreſſes it) to elect their repreſentatives, and the ſheriff endorſed a return of them upon his Oxfordſhire writ.

22. As

22. As the right of Berks ſo to elect its proportion of repreſentatives, although *no writ* was iſſued, and of courſe *no* number at all pointed out to it, cannot be doubted; ſo, ſtronger will be the reaſon why any county, city, or town may and ought to elect *all* the repreſentatives it has a right in due proportion to have in parliament, although *a leſs number* ſhould be mentioned in the writ than ſuch juſt proportion.

23. Upon authority of the beſt calculations which have been made public, it appears that, until the collective body of the commons of England and Wales ſhall agree upon a different number of perſons to repreſent them than 513, the metropolis, together with the county of Middleſex, now repreſented by 10 members only, will be and are intitled to have in parliament 50 repreſentatives at leaſt; ſince that is leſs than a tenth part of the houſe of commons, and they contain more than a tenth part of the nation.

Note. SOUTHWARK is intitled to 5, WESTMINSTER to 10, LONDON to 10, and MIDDLESEX, including the populous ſuburbs of theſe cities, 25.—Equalizing repreſentation would give to Middleſex and the metropolis five times their preſent privilege, and annual

nual parliaments would multiply that again by 7; ſo that by a complete reform it would become 35 times as great as it is now; or equivalent to a poſitive gain of 3,500 *per cent.* But this in fact conveys but a faint idea of the benefits they would derive from the change; ſince it is not in figures to ſhew the difference between proſperity and ruin; liberty and ſlavery.

24. It alſo appears that the county of Cornwall, which contains leſs than the 49th part of the nation, and is conſequently intitled to only 10 repreſentatives, has now no leſs than 44.

Note 1. Middleſex and the metropolis united, pay more than a 7th part of the national land-tax; while the contribution of Cornwall is leſs than a 63d part.

Note 2. Should parliament fail to *undo* thoſe things which have been done to prevent annual elections, and the people be compelled to proceed to elections without ſuch forms of proceeding being *preſcribed* to them, as the caſe requires, their own wiſdom muſt ſupply the deficiency; and they muſt agree to elect by pariſhes, or by ſtreets, and appoint their own return-

ing officers for each of ſuch diviſions, as well as a general one for the whole, in caſe the preſent returning officers ſhould refuſe to do their duty.

25. To ſay nothing of the neceſſity of repreſentation—(not a rotten *ſubſtitute*)—for conſtituting it the duty of citizens to obey *any* law whatever, it is ſufficient to propound that it is the ſpirit of the conſtitution, and of the law of the land, that it is the doctrine of juſtice and common ſenſe, and that it is now the dictate of ſelf-preſervation and the ſtern command of neceſſity, that we *no longer pay our taxes*, until the *three* ſtatutes which rob us of a conſtitutional repreſentation in parliament be reſcinded, and Engliſhmen be once more made free in *fact* as well as in *theory*.

26. Self-preſervation being the firſt law of nature, and the rights of juſtice and freedom being individual as well as collective; although particular counties and towns may poſſibly be ſomewhat tardy in conſulting their own and the common ſafety, yet others more wiſe and generous may in the mean time proceed, and begin the ſalvation of their country with purging *their* proportion of the commons houſe of parliament.

Note.

Note. So glorious an example in Middleſex and the metropolis could not fail to animate the whole nation to ſtand up as one man in defence of its liberties.

27. As the ſeizure of any man's property to the amount of taxes impoſed upon him contrary to juſtice would be a robbery; ſo every tax-gatherer ſo ſeizing, together with every conſtable, juſtice of the peace, or other acceſſory, would be open to a proſecution at law for the ſame.

28. As the judges of this land have in all times been renowned for their wiſdom and integrity, and as Engliſh juries have ever been the bulwark of Engliſh liberty; we have no reaſon to ſuppoſe that they would ſeal their country's doom, by enforcing TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION.

Note. A reſolution not to pay taxes, implies that no man who made it would be ſo baſe as to become a purchaſer at the ſale of his neighbour's goods, when ſeized on for his taxes. — Herds and flocks, the produce of the harveſt in kind, and bales of merchandiſe, would be a currency rather too ſlow and cumberſome for the purpoſes of government. By this peace-

able, this infallible mode of reſiſtance, we might bring infatuated miniſters to reaſon, and defend our property from their rapacious hands; although the whole army had no other employment than to be tax-gatherers, and had, like themſelves, forgotten their country, and its conſtitution. But remembering the diſappointment of James, they would be ſhy of putting their truſt in an Engliſh army for ſuch a purpoſe, were it in the nature of things for it to perform the office, which however they know it is not.

To theſe propoſitions and remarks I ſhall only add, that in the opinion of the wiſeſt and beſt men I know, his grace the Duke of Richmond, for having propoſed in the laſt parliament a bill for re-inſtating us in the full enjoyment of thoſe rights, by the exerciſe of which we might preſerve the purity and independency of our own houſe of parliament, deſerves the warmeſt thanks which the gratitude of his country can breathe forth; and, as by ſo doing he has made as it were a mathematical appeal to our underſtandings, and given a proof of patriotiſm which there does not ſeem to be

in the human mind a poſſibility of doubting, he merits every honeſt man's ſupport.

On the other hand, it ought to be obſerved, that, ſo repeatedly hath this nation within a century paſt been duped by ſpecious pretences of patriotiſm, that the very term is become a bye-word generally conſtrued to ſignify *a luſt of power under a popular covering*; and the people can no longer believe in any thing but *demonſtration*. Unleſs therefore men in high ſtations ſhall make this reſtitution of our rights their grand object, nothing they have yet done or ſaid, or can do or ſay, will be any ſecurity to the people, that, raiſed to power, they would not turn out Pulteneys or Walpoles, thoſe reputed whigs and patriots of their day.

London, Feb. 24, 1781.

POSTSCRIPT.

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THE news-papers inform us, that the very able and eloquent mover of a lately rejected bill, intended as "a beginning" of reformation, has ſaid, that "nothing could be ſo ridiculous and romantic as a reformer without probability and proſpect." This is a ſentiment to which I by no means ſubſcribe; for I apprehend that neither Luther, Knox, nor other original movers of great reformations, could have pleaded at the commencement of their ſeveral undertakings, either "probability or proſpect," as "a juſtification of themſelves in bringing forward their plans," for overturning the ſyſtems of falſehood and tyranny they attacked. It is ſufficient that a ſyſtem is *falſe*, *oppreſſive* and *diſgraceful* to mankind. That is a reformer's juſtification: and it becomes the duty of every man who ſees it, to bear his honeſt teſtimony againſt ſuch a ſyſtem, and to point out the means by which it ought to be, and might be overturned; whether a probability or proſpect of ſucceſs be viſible to *him* or not. Let him do that which is right; and leave the event in the

the hand of God; who knoweth how to bring great things to paſs from apparently ſmall cauſes. But, ſo far as human wiſdom is concerned in the queſtion, and I mean not to depreciate wiſdom, it remains to be ſeen in this country, whether thoſe who urge reformation on the immutable foundations of truth, and the conſtitution, and recommend it by a demonſtration of diſintereſtedneſs in themſelves, and of poſitive and perpetual benefits to the millions;—or thoſe who take the ground of ſtate expediency without ſuch demonſtrations, are the reformers moſt expoſed to ridicule. Theſe laſt have already acted in the character of reformers for many years paſt, but without any reaſon to boaſt of their progeſs.

The reform contended for in the foregoing letters, certainly is not to the taſte of thoſe numerous nobles, nabobs, and wealthy perſons who are poſſeſſed of boroughs, and conſequently reckon upon a return of members to parliament, as upon a part of the profits of their eſtates; nor is it much more palatable to many others whoſe minds are ſo tinctured with ariſtocratic prejudices, as to revolt at the idea of true popular freedom. I cannot help all that. It is however the only reform

that

that can make us a free people. If there be in ſuch nobles and other men a power to prevent it, and that they will rather ſacrifice their freedom as Engliſhmen, than their pride and unjuſt domination as nobles and powerful perſons, why then all I have to ſay, is, that this country is no longer a country for a man who ſets a value upon liberty; but he muſt inroll himſelf a citizen in ſome other, where proſtitute venality and a proud nobility are not combined to root it out. But I have better hopes: and I truſt that honeſt men of all parties, and of all ranks, will yet be found to join the people in *reſtoring the conſtitution*, which is the power of *all*, rather than yield themſelves up, as ſlaves to the power of *one*.

FINIS.